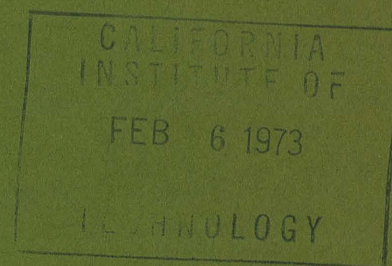


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17

THE OVAMBO: OUR PROBLEMS AND HOPES

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MUNGER AFRICANA LIBRARY NOTES

Two Dollars

Issue #17

February, 1973

THE OVAMBO: OUR PROBLEMS AND HOPES

Bishop Leonard N. Auala
of Southwest Africa/Namibia

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FRONT COVER: Lithograph, 1956 [Number Two of eight],
by Rupert Shepherd, in the Africana Library.

Introduction

Of the three-quarter million inhabitants of South West Africa/Namibia, almost one-half are the Ovambo, making them by far the largest ethnic group occupying this sparsely settled territory. They are concentrated in the relatively isolated and underdeveloped north of the country, although their territory receives the most rainfall in a land which is mostly desert. As the religious leader of the majority of the Ovambo, Bishop Auala occupies an important and critical position.

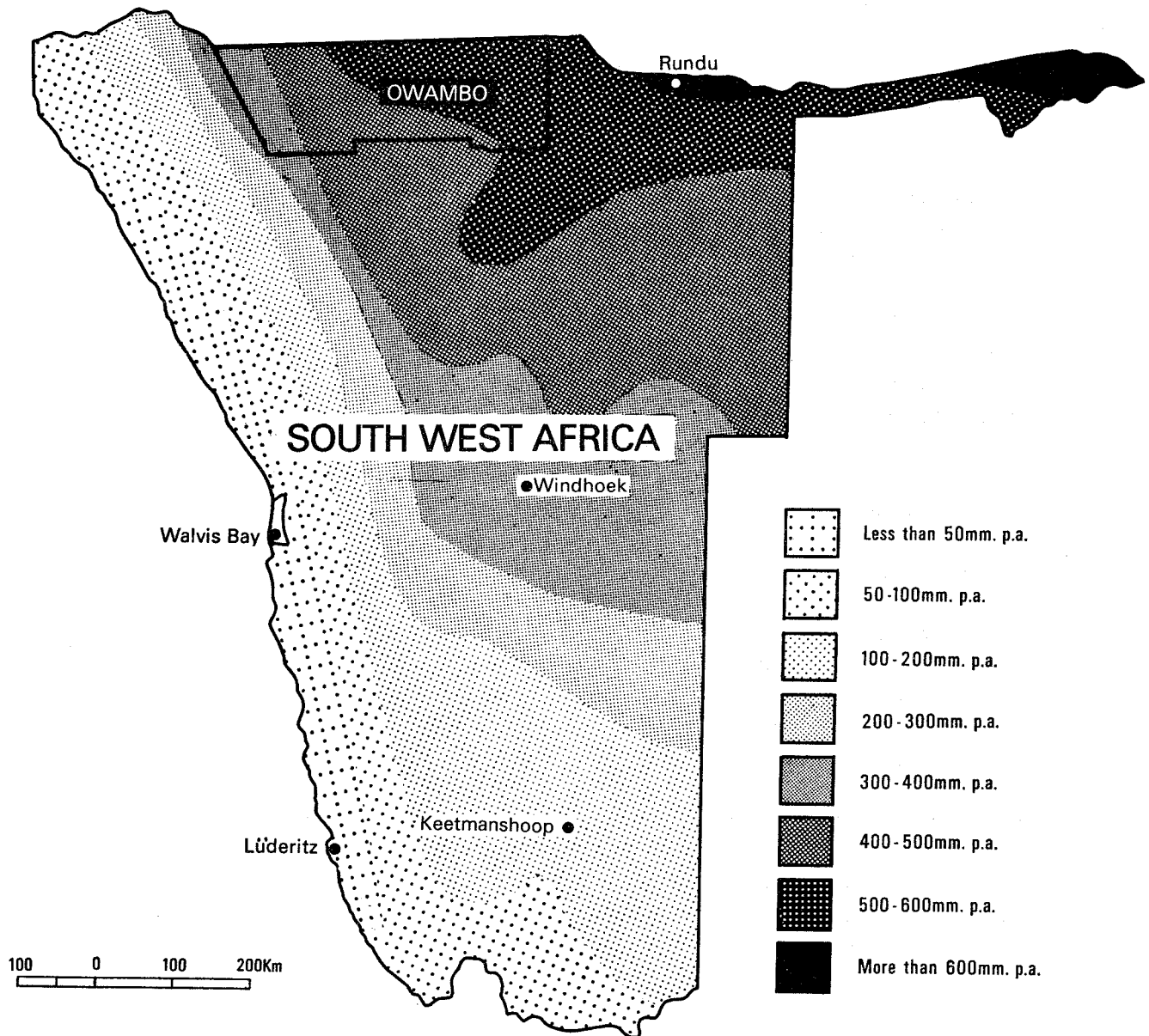
The economy of South West Africa/Namibia is controlled by Afrikaans-, German-, and English-speaking whites. Political power has been in the hands of the white oligarchy, dominated by the predominately Afrikaner National Party. The most politically active African group throughout the country's history has been the Herero. They consistently opposed European rule--both German and South African.

The South African government has counted heavily upon the Ovambos to provide an example of African support for the policy of "Separate Development" to give "individual freedoms" to the disparate racial groups in the territory. It was largely because of presumed support from the Ovambos that South Africa offered to hold a referendum within the territory, an offer which was rejected by the United Nations. During this period the political leader of the Ovambos was Chief Shiimi, who was a strong supporter of "Separate Development."

The Herero have always opposed the policy of "Separate Development." The second largest African group, the Damaras, has indicated its opposition to the "separate freedoms" doctrine. Bishop Auala, although opposed to violence, has also been a consistent opponent of this policy.

On December 13, 1971, a major strike broke out in South West Africa/Namibia. Of the 15,000 African workers who went on strike, the majority were Ovambos. Most of the strikers were involved in some form of contract labor. The strike virtually paralyzed production for weeks, as the Ovambo strikers were repatriated to

AVERAGE ANNUAL RAINFALL
(in Mm)



Ovamboland. Only gradually did mining and other operations resume with African labor and only after considerable revisions had been made on the old contract labor system.

The whites in the territory and the South African government were both taken by surprise by the strike. The South African government, probably because of the delicate international position of the territory, handled the early stages of the strike with kid gloves. The highly efficient Anglo-American Corporation was as mystified by the suddenness of the strike among its employees in the diamond fields as was the government. This largest of South African business organizations, headed by Harry Oppenheimer, might have been expected to know more than the government because of its supposedly close relations with its workers, its generally superior working conditions and pay for the territory, and its more liberal racial views as compared with those of the government. As a senior executive of Anglo said just after the strike, "We will have to completely reevaluate the accuracy of our information about our labor force." The same may be said of the government's various information gathering agencies, including the police.

Normally, the ending of such a traumatic strike--one the workers appear to have won by obtaining significant concessions with relatively few reprisals against the strike leaders--would be followed by a long period of stock taking by the South African authorities. But the political pressure of South West Africa is such that it was only a matter of months before Prime Minister Vorster announced a major step towards internal self-government for "Ovambostan." It has not yet reached the stage of the Transkei, although it is far more consolidated physically than Kwazulu. Political pressures, however, could lead to the Ovambos' moving the most rapidly of all the ethnic groups to find "self-government" under the government's policy of eventual full independence--including membership in the United Nations--for at least a dozen African ethnic groupings.

Political progress towards independence of the "Homelands" has been particularly rapid in the past year. The Transkei obtained a territorial authority in 1956; in 1963 it had its legislative assembly and became "self-governing." According to South African government spokesmen, "This lengthy procedure will not be necessary in respect of other homelands as the Bantu Homelands Constitution Act provides for the establishment of self-governing territories by proclamation." The Tswanas received a legislative assembly in May 1971; the

Ciskei and Venda authorities in June 1971; the North Sotho and Machangana authorities in July 1971; and the South Sotho on October 1, 1971.

In the case of the Ovambos, the Executive Council has seven portfolios compared with six in the previous arrangements since, according to the government's calculations, there are seven sub-ethnic groups to be represented.

Africanization, long a burning issue in former colonial Africa, has been moving with greater rapidity in South Africa. It compares fairly well with the rate which obtained after independence in former British and French territories. In 1963 the Transkei had 18.6% of the government posts held by whites, but only 9.8% in 1969. The percentage of whites is already that low in Ovamboland.

Against the flurry of activity in both South and South West Africa is the continued protest within the United Nations against this "fragmentation." The U.N. Council for Namibia issued a statement on July 12, 1972, denouncing "self-government" for the Ovambos and requesting South Africa to rescind the step. It called the attention of the Secretary General and the Security Council to "grave events" in Namibia.

In a book on Ovamboland (more recently called "Owambo"), published by the Department of Foreign Affairs*, the point of view of the South African government is well summarized:

"In a radio message to the Owambo people on 29th September, 1970, Chief Councillor Ushona Shiimi emphasized his nation's right to self-determination and to plan its own destiny and future. 'It is our right as a fully fledged nation to make our own choice,' he said. 'The Owambo Nation has chosen, and nothing has happened to make it change its mind.'

"This epitomizes the spirit in which constitutional development has proceeded since the South African Government came to administer Owambo in 1915. The emphasis, as the Chief Councillor implied, has all along been on the people's freedom of choice.

"When South African administration began, the Owambo tribes had

*Owambo, Department of Foreign Affairs, Republic of South Africa, 1971, 94pp. Numerous photographs, including many in color.

for a very long time functioned as separate political entities, each with its own system of rule.

"The traditional political systems of the Owambo tribes, although largely based on hereditary principles, also contained elements of a democratic nature. Important decisions, apparently given autocratically, were taken only after consultation with the people in tribal meetings. That is why, as a rule, they were obeyed.

"On the other hand, the old hereditary system undoubtedly had its weaknesses too. The system did not suit conditions in which there was a growing need to appoint men to posts for which they were not hereditarily eligible, but who had acquired educational qualifications or gained experience likely to be of special value in governmental bodies.

"Both the hereditary and the elective systems have their advantages and disadvantages. It is hoped that a combination of the two will prove its worth in Owambo.

"Mainly on the basis of indirect rule, the South African authorities had worked many years to assist the Owambo people on the road towards a more modern and effective system of self-government.

"It was no easy task to foster the idea of one central government for the country amongst its seven tribal groups. After years of efforts directed at creating greater unity among the Owambo people, the stage was reached in 1967 for large scale consultations with representatives of the various tribes with a view to establishing a centralised government and administration.

"In 1967 the responsible South African Minister met a representative meeting of the seven Owambo tribes. Announcing that the way was open to them to advance to self-government in accordance with their own wishes, the Minister emphasized that:

'One very important matter which the Republican Government recommends to you, is that in your system of self-government you should include elected representatives in addition to your traditional leaders, and in a manner to be determined by yourselves.'

"Subsequently, in 1968, legislation was enacted by the South African Parliament enabling Owambo to advance to the self-governing stage.

This was followed by a series of public meetings for the purpose of consulting each tribal community in Owambo in regard to the recognition of its governing authority, and the determination of the powers, functions and duties of such authority."

The government publication concludes:

"Owambo has made good progress in many fields. This has taken place against a background of climatic and geographical disadvantages. The progress achieved to date is obviously due in large measure to Owambo's special relationship with South Africa. South Africa's support cannot be measured by money alone, though this is considerable. More important are the facilities and services which South Africa provides, including transport services, harbours, telecommunications, trained personnel, and in general, technical expertise. In aspects of administration, and in the scientific and technical fields, the country and its people can rely on staff with intimate experience of local conditions and of the best solutions to particular problems. In many respects, South Africa's contribution is irreplaceable and Owambo's progress on the road to self-determination is dependent on her present natural relationship with South Africa remaining undisturbed."

The stakes are very large for both South Africa and the United Nations. The visit of Secretary General Waldheim to South West was viewed with great skepticism by the more militant African nations. In a notable break with the past, the South African government agreed to accept a special United Nations representative to work towards self-determination of South West Africa. The agreement was worked out by the South African Foreign Minister on a visit to the Secretary General in New York. The representative is stationed in New York, but has made an extensive tour of the country of Namibia and has reported back to the Secretary General in November 1972.

There is a clear difference of interpretation in Pretoria and on the East River of what "self determination" means in this instance. The South Africans are moving cautiously to solve a complicated problem by focusing on self determination of individual ethnic groups within the disputed territory. Waldheim, and his lieutenant, Mr. A. Escher would prefer to concentrate on self determination for all of Namibia without regard to ethnicity. The issue is certainly the most vexing one which the Secretary General faces with the African states which have a continental plurality at the United Nations. The militant

African states and some of the relatively moderate ones are viewing the Escher report with some suspicion, because they are afraid that any movement towards the South African government's kind of self determination will turn into a delaying tactic for the independence of the territory as a whole.

Behind the scenes, there is a broad movement which sees South West Africa as the legal lever by which to overturn the whole white southern redoubt. The movement has support from the World Council of Churches, along with many liberal/non-Communist groups in the west. It is joined and enthusiastically supported by Communist nations and Communist organizations. The May 1972 issue of the African Communist (the London-based, Leipzig-printed official publication of the South African Communist Party) ran an article by J. Villiers, in which the plan was clearly expressed:

"More is at stake here than simply the future of Namibia. If the UN can be brought to intervene decisively and wrest Namibia from Vorster, the door is open to effective sanctions against apartheid in South Africa, to the total isolation of the illegal settler regime in Zimbabwe, and to the defeat of Portugal's weakening rule in her 3 African territories. That is why not only South Africa and Portugal, but also the US, Britain and France are desperately striving to halt the march of history. If, at the UN, they can be politically isolated and routed, the independence of Namibia must follow speedily. And in this real possibility lies a great challenge to all democratic and progressive forces in the West."

There is no doubt that a South West Africa which is friendly to military forces hostile to the Republic of South Africa poses a vastly greater military problem to the Republic than the present geopolitical configuration.

It may well be that South Africa could be persuaded and pressured into various measures granting more political rights and assisting economic well being for the African peoples in South West Africa. The first step has been taken in the acceptance of the principle of United Nations authority. But if the price of what will never be called concessions, but rather generous and open grants of authority, is to be merely the first move towards the destruction of the government of South Africa, such concessions are most unlikely to be voluntarily forthcoming.

Taking this situation into account, plus consideration of the strike and

Bishop Auala's comments in this NOTE, it would appear that the South African government is engaged in a move which might variously be described as bold, dangerous, imaginative, or foolhardy. The South African government placed no obstacles in the way of Bishop Auala's visiting the United States for a 45-day period. The government will undoubtedly draw considerable satisfaction from the Bishop's views on American business investment in the territory. It may be dissatisfied with some of his other views.

Bishop Auala is Chairman of the Church Board of the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambo-Kavango Church of Ondangwa in Ovamboland. He was born in Oniipa in Ovamboland 68 years ago. He took his primary and secondary school training in the Finnish Mission school in Oniipa, and a higher teaching certificate at the Okahandja Training College in 1935. He attended the Moravian Seminary in Port Elizabeth in 1956-57. In 1967 he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Theology at Helsinki University.

Bishop Auala is married and has ten children. He has written for various church publications and founded the Afrikaans/Oshindonga publications for schools.

The Bishop has been a member of the Executive Board of the Lutheran World Federation since 1960. His church duties have taken him on various trips to Tanzania, Malagasy, Ethiopia, Iceland, Yugoslavia, Canada, Switzerland, Finland, France, Japan, Germany, and Sweden. This was his second visit to the United States.

E. S. M.



THE OVAMBO: OUR PROBLEMS AND HOPES

Bishop Auala gave forthright answers to questions posed specifically for these NOTES regarding the complex problems of his people, of his church, and of his country. The Bishop had on a white shirt with a small-figured black and red tie, and a dark blue suit cut across the front by a gold watch chain. His attire, his salt-and-pepper hair, and his general demeanor presented an impression of great dignity, sincerity, and honesty of purpose. Bishop Auala spoke primarily in his own Ovambo tongue (here translated). Occasionally he used simple, but clear, English, and, less often, a more fluent Afrikaans (also translated).

Q: Bishop Auala, would you describe your country for our readers.

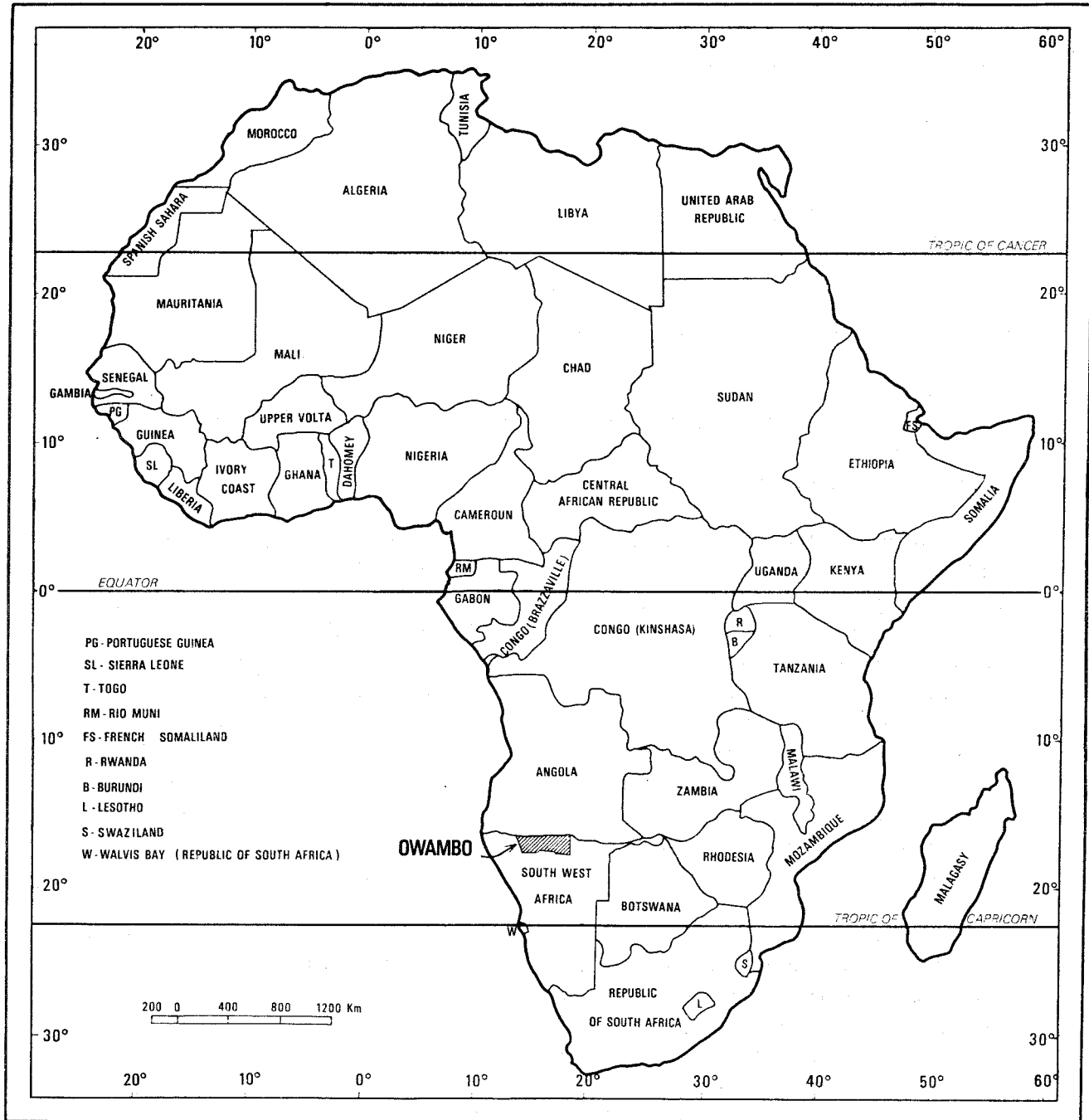
BISHOP: Many of you will not know where the church which I serve lies. You may not have heard the name, and when you hear it, you will have trouble saying it. The Ovambokavango church is in the northern area of South West Africa.

South West Africa, also called Namibia, is an area of land about 700 miles long and 450 miles wide, lying along the west coast of the southern part of Africa. This one-time German colony was assigned to South Africa which was to administer it as mandated territory for the old League of Nations, after World War I. The administration continues to this day, though by resolution of the United Nations, and the advice of the World Court, the mandate has been withdrawn. Seven-hundred and forty-six thousand people live in this area, a population made up of some 11 different tribes and groups. About 15 percent of the population is white, mostly located in the central part of the territory. The Ovambos make up about 47 percent of the population of Namibia.

Farming, mining, and cattle raising provide the main sources of income. The contract labor schemes have brought about the situation that many Ovambos have had to leave their homes and families for one year or more to work in mines or on farms, causing great problems for families of my people.

Q: Would you please tell about the church with which you are affiliated.

LOCATION OF OWAMBO IN AFRICA



BISHOP: There are 3 Lutheran Churches in Namibia. One is called the German Evangelical Lutheran Church, the second the Evangelical Lutheran Church in South West Africa (Rhenish Mission Church), and the church which I serve, the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambokavango Church. All three have been in close contact with each other since 1961, and two of them, the Rhenish Mission Church and my church, have formed a united Lutheran Church just last April. I am also privileged to represent this church. At the moment this church functions more as a Federation, though we look upon it as a church, and the two groups will grow and work more closely together in the years to come. The members of the 3 Lutheran Churches represent more than 60 percent of the total population of Namibia.

My own church was established by Finnish Missionaries who came to my country in 1870 and started to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom of God. The work was difficult, and it took 13 years before the first baptism took place. From 1883 on, many have turned from the old life to the new life in Jesus Christ. Those who heard told others about Him. Many were added to the fellowship, and the growth of my church from that time to our present day tells of the importance of Evangelism and Mission in our church.

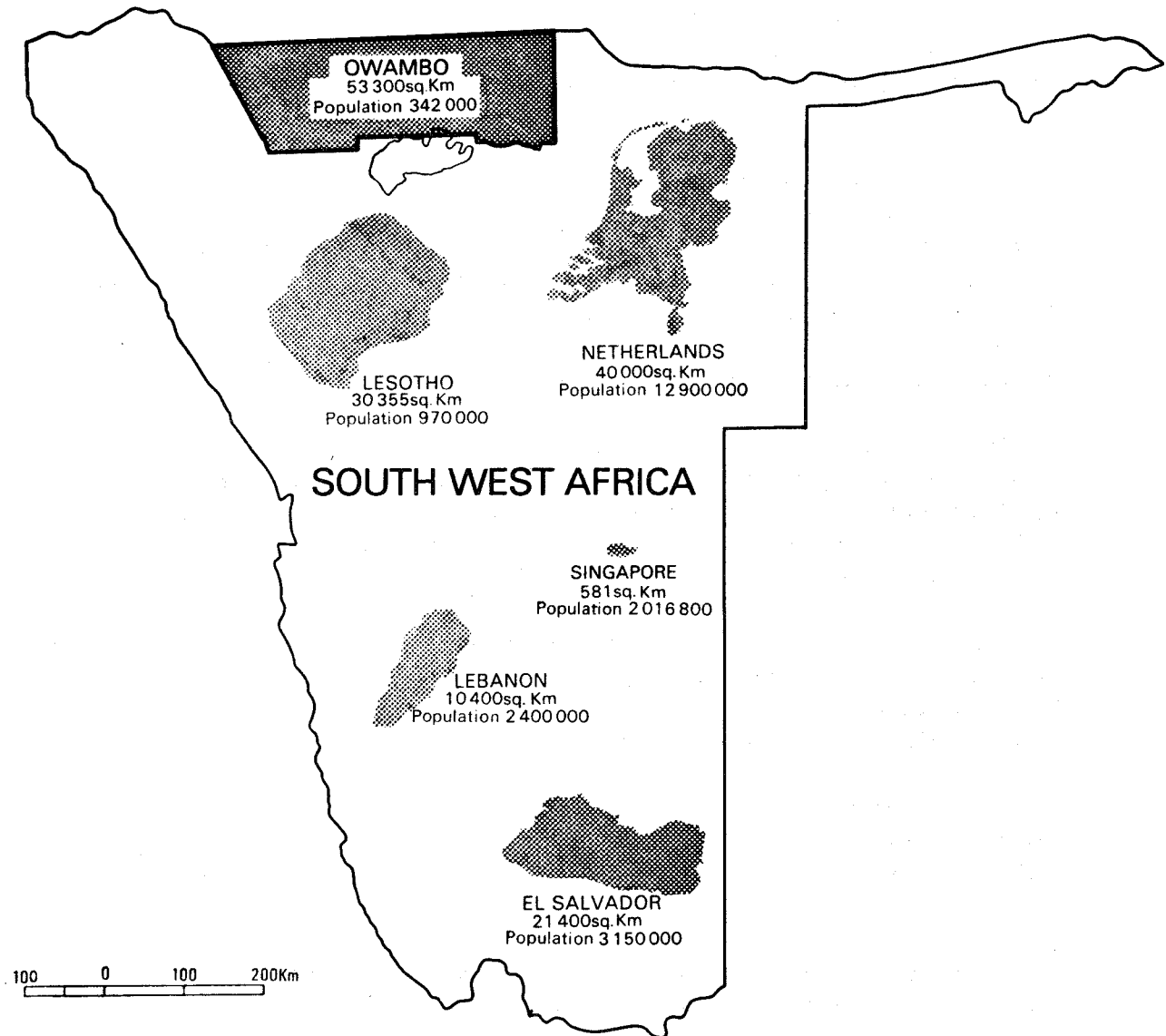
In 1890 we had about 500 members. In 1910 the church had grown to about 2,000 members; in 1930 we had 23,000 members; and in 1950 we numbered 63,000 members. On our 100th anniversary in 1970, we numbered 195,000 members, and today we have about 210,000 members.

Education has been one of the primary tasks of our church from the beginning. A teacher-training school was established in 1913, which has provided practically all the teachers who have taught both Christians and non-Christians throughout the villages of our area.

In 1925 the first Ovambo Pastors were ordained and since 1937 all parishes have been served by indigenous pastors. In 1960 an indigenous pastor was elected to head the church and since 1963 this pastor has been the bishop of the church.

The work of mission by our church is being carried out especially among the Bushmen tribesmen, and among other tribes in the Angola area which borders our country to the north. The Bushmen live literally in the bush, hunting wild animals, eating roots and fruits. Because of the dryness of the land, they are poor and sickly, moving

A COMPARATIVE STUDY IN SIZES



from place to place. Our first task is often to gather them and assist especially their old people who can no longer move about, and are left to die, or are killed by wild animals. We teach the tribesmen new trades and skills, especially farming, and they learn a new way of life. This work is difficult but the number of Christians among the Bushmen is growing. I invite you and your readers to assist us in this mission work to these suffering people.

Our church, together with our sister church with whom we have united, sees as a part of our witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ, that we must speak out against all forms of injustice. Already in 1964 we expressed publically our grave doubts about the policy of our government concerning separate development. In 1967 we issued a memorandum opposing this policy and lamenting the manner in which one large segment of the population--the non-white segment--was being treated. At that time we asked that government leaders meet with us to discuss these problems, but our request was unheeded. In 1971 we issued an open letter to the Prime Minister of South Africa, asking the government to acknowledge the human rights which are given to us by our creator, and belong to us. We indicated in further discussions that we could not believe that God would wish us to be separated from each other as races or tribes in a land where we have lived side by side many years. We could not believe that one group should dominate and continue to exploit as well as mistreat another group. It is time for our church to be the voice of the voiceless. We cannot be silent. We must bring the hope of Jesus Christ to a people that is without hope.

This brings me to talk about our relation to our dear brothers and sisters in Christ in America. It is a great gift of God that we are so closely connected to each other because of our common faith. Though distances between us are great, and most of them are white and most of us are black, we are one in Christ. This is--I repeat--God's gift.

One way this has been shown is through the Lutheran World Federation. It means we belong to a world-wide family, and when we preach the gospel we are not alone, but know that a big Christian community is speaking with us, and supporting us, also concretely. There are those who would isolate us from such family ties. We need this fellowship for our life as a church of Christ. In this fellowship we, as churches, can support, encourage, correct, and give to each other. The Lutheran World Federation has not only provided us with many concrete resources to build hospitals, social centers, agricultural projects, and to carry out our mission, but it provides us the ties through which we know we are not alone.

Q: How do you feel about efforts in this country to have American businesses withdraw from your country?

BISHOP: I am opposed to such efforts. We know American businessmen and they are good employers. We need the jobs they provide and many more jobs. We want them to pay higher wages and to provide more training for my people. We want more American businessmen in my country because they are a good example to others. Why is it that some people in this country want American business to withdraw?

COMMENT: Different people have different motives. Some think withdrawal of all foreign business will lead to an economic recession and eventual political revolution in which the African people will come to power. Others have lesser objectives. Some sincere Christians feel it is morally wrong for U.S. business to be in your country.

BISHOP: We don't like that attitude. I'm not for revolution. We need jobs from American business. They are very good at salary, but my people need more. When a man earns only forty Rand a month [\$56] then he cannot give much to support his church. I agree with Chief Minister Kaiser Matanzima and Chief Gatsha Buthelezi in wanting American businessmen to come to my country and to stay. I have only a short statement: I ask you to accept my word that I speak on behalf of black Namibians--Ovambos, Hereros, Damaras, Basters, Coloured--for all of them in wanting American business.

Q: On June 21, 1971, the World Court decided by a vote of 13-2 that South African occupation of your country was illegal. When did the Ovambo people learn of this decision?

BISHOP: At 1:15 that day some of our people with radio sets heard it all over Ovamboland on the Afrikaans news. That evening we heard it again on Radio Ovambo. Then we read the newspapers from Windhoek. Government officials and people from Radio Ovambo came to see me the day of the decision and recorded my views. I made it clear that I welcomed the World Court decision. Later, when I was driving in my car, I heard the announcer say that Bishop Auala was not in favor of the decision. I was so angry I almost broke my car radio. I called the radio station and told them that they had the tape and that they must change the news. I spoke in Afrikaans and was very "skerp" [sharp] and the way they handled my statement was "slegte" [bad]. Then the head of Radio Ovambo came to my house to pacify me. He was afraid that Radio Ovambo would be distrusted if the newspapers, such as Allgemeine Zeitung in Windhoek, reported my views

differently. He apologized for an error in the broadcast.

I must say to you that the Chiefs are not happy with the South African government. I know and I have discussed this with Chief Eliafas. [Ed. Note:- Filemon Eliafas is the major Ovambo Chief who welcomed the recent announcement by the South African Prime Minister that the Ovambos were to receive "self government."] I said to the Chief, "You have a voice." He replied, "We have the government, but we are always used. We are told our words, but we are not happy in our hearts." It made me think of the many young Namibians who wrote the late Chief Shiimi that "Your eyes have been cut out and closed by banknotes." One young man of our Ovambos wrote, "Owa twipulwa omesho ove keembulu--omesho oye okwa tuvikwa nomafo oimaliwa kee-mbula." [Your eyes are shut by Boers*-your eyes are covered with leaves of money.]

Q: Then Chief Eliafas is not enthusiastic about separate development?

BISHOP: Well, I know all the people of our country--the Hereros, Damaras, Basters, Coloured, and others--want unity. But their political leaders are under government pressure to support separate development. The government creates a Bantustan and then Chiefs are made ministers of the government. This can make a wall between the Chiefs and their people. Chief Gatsha Buthelezi of Kwazulu is different. And the Transkei is different. There are over two million Xhosa in the Transkei, but we have only 500,000 people of all races in South West Africa.

Q: It was rumored at the time that Chief Shiimi was killed in an automobile accident that there might have been foul play because of his strong support for separate development. What is your view?

BISHOP: I know the death was only accidental. We knew that some of the young Ovambos hated Chief Shiimi. I heard about the accident around 4:00 or 5:00 Sunday afternoon. Monday morning I went to investigate and I found that he had really died in the accident.

Q: Some South African newspapers alleged that the major Ovambo (and other Africans) labor strike was due to outside influences. Do

*The word is translated "Boer" ("farmer" in Dutch) when used in a pejorative sense. In a friendly sense, the word "Afrikaner" is used.

you agree with this?

BISHOP: The strike was entirely inside the African people within the country. Some of them have protested the labor contracts for many years. They were hurt by the words of some government officials who said that Namibians wanted the old contract labor system. They said that if government officials say we want this contract we will show them on December 14th that we are not happy with the contract system.

After the strike some people in government thought the churches were behind the cause of the strike. This is not true. We supported it, but we did not start it. The old contract system is dead. There is a new system. It is not perfect. It is an improvement. The goodness of the new system is still not clear, still not settled.

Let me be clear: we do not hate whites or the government as such. But the system did not let people express their views. If the South African government can listen to our people and change, we will be happy for this. If the government won't, as I said to Prime Minister Vorster, "Die toekomst is donker" [The future is dark].

When the strike started, we Christians supported it. We thought that the only way the people could show their desire (because the government officials would not listen to spoken words) was to strike to let the employers know the will of the employees. We found that our people--the Ovambos--started the strike, but they told one another that there must be no violence. If someone saw a car full of whites, they should not throw stones. Strikers must be quiet or simply say, "We do not like the old contract labor system. It is finished. We want a better system. Until then we will not eat the food of employers. We will sleep outside our quarters. We will have no violence. We will have morning and evening prayers. Thus we will show our feelings in this drastic manner." When white police came along, the young people sang songs.

Q: The Episcopalians have said that many strikers used biblical phrases in their speeches. Was this true to your knowledge?

BISHOP: I have not heard about that.

Q: Did Ovambos from Angola participate in the strike?

BISHOP: Yes. They had permits from South West Africa to work on the contract system.

Q: Was there any effort to break the strike by importing Ovambos from Angola?

BISHOP: No.

Q: What are your feelings about the border with Angola dividing the Ovambo people--members of your church?

BISHOP: We don't want to change the boundary. Angola can stay another territory. But we do want free movement. The division was made before World War I, and we want to be in communion together as we were before the Treaty of Berlin. Some of my seminary students were born in Angola, and they want to be able to visit their people.

Q: In which direction is it the most difficult to move?

BISHOP: It is more difficult to go to Angola and easier to enter Namibia. There are two thousand Christians in my diocese who live in Angola. We support an evangelist for them. I cannot visit them officially, but members of our church can see them when they go as tourists. We must "save them" in the Christian sense, and so we are concerned about them. The difficulty is not caused only by the South African and the Angolan governments. Much of the difficulty comes from the Roman Catholic Church which has mission rights in southern Angola. Individual Governor Generals and local Governors vary in how much protestant activity they will allow in southern Angola. If there were freedom of religious choice, we would grow very fast in southern Angola. I have gone to the Roman Catholic authorities in Angola and discussed our problems with their priests. Many of them agree that our people should be saved and that our church has a role to play. In the future I will go to Luanda to meet the Governor General and hope to obtain free permits for church workers to move between South West and Angola. We also need to cooperate on the Ovambo bible with the Roman Catholics in Angola.

Q: What kind of access is there to Ovamboland?

BISHOP: There is a new regulation since the strike and we are now like other prohibited parts of South West Africa. Some visitors the government likes are allowed to come in. And the American Ambassador, Mr. Hurd, visited us in Ovamboland.

Q: Inasmuch as the Ovambo people are divided by the boundary with

Angola, is there a movement towards an "Ovambo Nationalism" such as there has been for "Kongo Nation"?

BISHOP: There are a lot of families divided by the border. The young people don't like it because they know a lot of countries where people are divided by boundaries, but can cross them easily. So they cut down part of the fence.

Q: You mentioned in your initial statement about the merging of the Finnish Lutheran and the German Lutheran African churches. What about the white German church and what about seminary training?

BISHOP: We have good relations with the pastors of the white German Church, but the members of their congregations are hesitant about creating one united Lutheran Church. We have a seminary now where Africans can train. The Commissioner, General M. J. Oliver, approached us and said that the government would build a big new seminary in Ovamboland just for the Ovambos. I told him, thank you, but we already had our seminary where we train people from various groups together.

Q: What is the background of your relationship with the South African Government?

BISHOP: We are in a sort of dialogue. In 1964, I talked with Minister of Bantu Affairs, De Wet Nel, a fine old man, and told him that we were not supporting separate development because it broke the unity we have and want to keep. Then we sent a memorandum to the government in 1967. In July, 1971, I joined with Moderator Paulus Gowaseb of the Rhenish Church to publish an open letter decrying the contract labor system as a "form of slavery" because of the low pay and the long time that men had to remain away from their families. Some people say the church is too much in politics, but we had to warn the government about the will of our people. When we asked to see the Prime Minister, his secretary wrote that dialogue was not possible because the government had already decided on separate development. But after the World Court decision on South West Africa, we were asked to meet with Prime Minister Vorster.

Q: Newmont, the American mining firm which operates at Tsumeb, says it will not take a position on international law regarding your country because "Newmont would not serve the interests of the people of South West Africa by encouraging confrontations whose

burdens, if Biafra, the Congo, and other instances give example, fall most heavily and grievously on innocent populations." Do you foresee any Biafran- or Congo-type situation developing in your country?

BISHOP: No, I do not.

Q: Are there guerilla forces, such as the MPLA, operating across the border in Angola?

BISHOP: No, they have not reached that part of Angola. I have been asked about Chinese support of liberation groups. I can say that the Ovambo people want to decide their own affairs. They would not want to be told what to do by the Chinese.

Q: Do you want dialogue with Prime Minister Vorster?

BISHOP: Yes, we do. I was asked to be the spokesman. Mr. Vorster was very polite in our conversations. He said that we were correct to want human rights and that we would have them in our homeland. I replied that we wanted them in all of our country as citizens. Both the South African government and we black people speak about development, but with a difference. Mr. Vorster says, "I believe in separate development." I say, "I believe in development of the whole country."

Since then we have had a meeting of twenty-four delegates from all the black groups. Mr. Vorster had told me that the door was open for another meeting. We expect to try to have another dialogue this year. If the government agrees, we will prepare our views very carefully.

Q: How are your relations with the Anglicans?

BISHOP: Very good. I have been asked to preach in their churches and we are good friends.

Q: Do you have any final comments?

BISHOP: I again ask you to accept my word that I speak on behalf of 300,000 people in Namibia and that they want American businessmen in our country. In my job as leader of the church, I realize that Namibians like American businessmen. My people must have better money so that they can support their church and give their children education.

Appendix I

SOUTH-WEST AFRICA: AN OPEN LETTER

Bishop Auala and Pastor Gowaseb

Windhoek
30th June, 1971.

His Honour
The Prime Minister,
Mr. B.J. Vorster
Pretoria

His Honour,

After the decision of the World Court at the Hague was made known on 21st June, 1971, several leaders and officials of our Lutheran Churches were individually approached by representatives of the authorities with a view to making known their views. This indicates to us that public institutions are interested in hearing the opinions of the Churches in this connection. Therefore we would like to make use of the opportunity of informing your Honour of the opinion of the Church Boards of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in SWA and the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambokavango Church which represent the majority of the indigenous population of S. W. A.

We believe that South Africa in its attempts to develop S. W. A. has failed to take cognizance of Human Rights as declared by U.N.O. in the year 1948 with respect to the non-white population. Allow us to put forward the following examples in this connection:

1. The government maintains that by the race policy it implements in our country, it promotes and preserves the life and freedom of the population. But in fact the non-white population is continuously being slighted and intimidated in their daily life. Our people are not free and by the way they are treated they do not feel safe. In this regard we wish to refer to Section 3 of Human Rights.
2. We cannot do otherwise than regard S. W. A., with all its racial groups, as a unit. By the Group Areas Legislation the people are denied the right of free movement and accommodation

within the borders of the country. This cannot be reconciled with Section 13 of the Human Rights.

3. People are not free to express or publish their thoughts or opinions openly. Many experience humiliating espionage and intimidation which has as its goal that a public and accepted opinion must be expressed, but not one held at heart and of which they are convinced. How can sections 18 and 19 of the Human Rights be realised under such circumstances?

4. The implementation of the policy of the government makes it impossible for the political parties of the indigenous people to work together in a really responsible and democratic manner to build the future of the whole of S. W. A. We believe that it is important in this connection that the use of the voting rights should also be allowed to the non-white population. (Sections 20 and 21 of the Human Rights.)

5. Through the application of Job Reservation, the right to a free choice of profession is hindered and this causes low remuneration and unemployment. There can be no doubt that the contract system breaks up a healthy family life because the prohibition of a person from living where he works, hinders the cohabitation of families. This conflicts with sections 23 and 25 of the Human Rights.

The Church Boards' urgent wish is that in terms of the declarations of the World Court and in cooperation with the U. N. O. of which South Africa is a member, your government will seek a peaceful solution to the problems of our land and will see to it that Human Rights be put into operation and that South West Africa may become a self-sufficient and independent State.

With high Esteem,

Bishop Dr. L. Auala
Chairman of the Church Board of the
Ev. Luth. Ovambokavango Church.

Moderator Pastor P. Gowaseb
Chairman of the Church Board of the
Ev. Luth. Church in S. W. A.
(Rhenish Mission Church)

Appendix II

EPISTLE TO THE NAMIBIANS

The following letter signed by the leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambo-Kavango Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in S. W. A. (Rhenish Mission Church) was sent by the Church Boards to the congregations and members of the two churches at the time of the Open Letter, June, 1971.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

We greet you with the words of Jesus: 'Peace be with you,' (John 20: 19).

On the 30th June, 1971, we gathered together as the Church Boards of our two Lutheran Churches because we felt that we must direct words of leadership and guidance to our congregations in this hour of need.

We are concerned about the future of this country and about the future of the various peoples who live here. We not only feel this concern today but because of the judgment of the World Court given on the 21st June, 1971, we can no longer remain silent. We feel that if we, as the Church, remain silent any longer, we will become liable for the life and future of our country and its people.

The judgment of the World Court was the answer to the Prayer of many of our people, because this judgment involves the hope of freedom and recognition of personal worth. We believe that our people would not have taken themselves to other bodies and also not to the U. N. O. if the Government of South Africa had not withheld from them the basic rights of man.

The mandate which was given to South Africa included the obligation to create conditions of peace and freedom and to guarantee such conditions for all the inhabitants of South West Africa.

True peace does not allow people to hate each other. But we observe that our people are caught up with fear and that the hate between people is increasing, especially between white and non-white. In our opinion this fatal development is caused and upheld by the policy of apartheid. We believe that a false impression arises

when it is stated that peace reigns in our country. The peace is maintained by forceful measures.

To the freedom of the people belongs also the freedom of the spread of the Gospel. We are concerned that Christians of various population groups are hindered by numerous laws and regulations from freely gathering together for the word of God.

As a result of the application of the Group Areas Laws the activities of the Church are severely restricted and the unity of the various races of the Church curtailed. Individual Ministers of the Gospel and Christians are filled with fear and distrust. They are also sometimes hindered in their evangelizing by the refusal of permits.

The true development of the inhabitants of South West Africa on a Christian basis ought to lead to unity and fraternity between the races. We are convinced that this must be the lasting goal for further and future development. The Government, by the application of the Homelands policy, contributes to the creation and continuation forever of the divisions between the races. It is stated that this policy is intended to lead the races to self-government and independence. But our small race groups cannot really be aided by separation. They will be isolated and denied the chance to take a proper part in the development of the country.

We also want to inform the members of our congregations that we are determined to inform the Government of this state of affairs and of our conviction of what changes must occur. We appeal to you to maintain the peace and with a peaceful disposition to continue seeking our brothers in all racial groups. We want to advise you also to build bridges and not to break down contact.

Dear Congregations, we as your Church Boards do not intend sowing seeds of animosity, discord and strife. Our purpose is to stand for the truth and for a better future for our people and races, even when it involves suffering for us.

May the Lord be with you in His Mercy and give you guidance through His Spirit. Let us continue praying for all authorities (I Tim. 2: 1-2), so that they may be prepared to alter the grievous circumstances and to take cognizance of the true interests of this country and its peoples.

On behalf of the two Church Boards,

/signed/ Dr. L. Auala
Chairman of the Church Board
Ev. Luth. Ovambokavango Church
Ondangwa, Ovamboland.

/signed/ Paulus Gowaseb
Chairman of the Church Board
Ev. Luth. Church in S. W. A.
(Rhenish Mission Church)
Windhoek, S. W. A.

Windhoek, 30th June, 1971.

Appendix III

DIALOGUE WITH THE PRIME MINISTER

In response to the open letter the Prime Minister met with church leaders in Windhoek. What follows is Bishop Auala's inaugural address at the interview with the Prime Minister on August 18th, 1971:

The Honourable, the Prime Minister, and all the eminent officials of the South African Government.

It is an honour and a privilege for me and my brethren from the Church Councils to stand before you today in the dialogue which has been granted and arranged by the Hon. The Prime Minister. I have been asked to state our case with this introduction and to explain what we have to discuss during our negotiations today.

As leaders of our two Lutheran Churches in South West Africa we wrote an open letter to the Hon. the Prime Minister. We did so because we as leaders bear a responsibility towards the members of our congregations, but also towards the authorities. The Lord appointed us as pastors. The pastoral office is also a watchman's office as we read in Ezekiel 3: 17-21: 'Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth and give them warning from me.'

After the verdict of the World Court and the reply to it by the Hon. the Prime Minister were made known to us, we were asked: What is the opinion of the churches on these matters? We aired our opinion in the letter to the Hon. the Prime Minister. But our people in the congregations also had many questions in connection with the verdict of the World Court and the reply to it by the Hon. the Prime Minister. We felt, therefore, that we should also address a pastoral message to them. The main points in both letters are the same, only with the difference of what we expect from our people and the things we expect from our Government.

What we ask of the South African Government is to grant human rights fully also to the indigenous population. In this way a relationship between the Whites and the non-Whites can develop which is based on the equal dignity of all men. Our people are suffering because they are denied human rights.

We remember the attempts of the Government to develop our country. Much money was spent on schools and hospitals and better external facilities. We recognised this with appreciation. But the policy of apartheid which separates people from each other and treats us non-Whites in an inferior manner in everyday life through many laws precludes joy at the plans for development. Here a change has to come otherwise the future of our country and its people will be dark.

We are subjects of the Government, but Baasskap forces us to be the subjects of every White man. We are forced to call every White man 'baas.' Many local people are reviled or assaulted because they have called the White man not 'baas' but 'mister.' Even though the White man is not my employer I must call him 'baas' otherwise things go awry.

There is much to be said about the conduct of the police. They are abusing their powers. Innocent people among us have been beaten and tortured. They have been given electrical shocks and intimidated. Guns were pointed at them and they were threatened with death. These things have been going on arbitrarily. According to the Bible only the wrongdoer should fear the sword of authority (Romans 13: 1; 1 Peter 2: 14). But today all of us fear the police. They do not treat us as human beings but as an evil.

We are recognised as people in our own right and now and then well treated as human beings by a mere handful of Whites. But when they do this they are contravening the policy of the Government. They can be prosecuted. But for us it is a cooling drop of water in our burning thirst for human rights. How long still must Whites break the law if they treat non-Whites as human beings?

At this point let me refer to the fact that we do not have the right to move around freely within South West Africa. The indigenous person feels homeless because of the pass laws which hamper even church attendance. He does not have the right granted every White man. Ovamboland and other homelands have many sights worth seeing. The Whites may enjoy them as tourists. But our Churches were not allowed to establish a retreat in Swakopmund where our pastors could go for a holiday to have a good rest from their work.

Families Broken

Our indigenous population may only enjoy its rights in the homelands.

In the homelands we can experience our human rights, but not in Tsumeb or Otjiwarongo or in Windhoek. According to policy all must go to the homelands. Only the non-White contract labourer may later leave the homeland for a longer period because the Whites need him. The contract system is today already a great evil which shatters many families and brings great misery to families. According to policy, the system is being developed still further. In the year 1967 already I approached the Government and asked for the contract system to be changed. I saw the erstwhile Commissioner General at Ondangwa and Oshakati. I visited the Chief Commissioner of Bantu Affairs in Windhoek. All they said was: It is impossible to bring about a change.

After that I took the matter to Pretoria and told of all the problems which we experience in the congregations, in the marriages of the men who are away practically all their lives. I was told that the matter was enjoying attention. But now the contract system is developing so that it is assuming even greater proportions through the homelands policy. It is not the will of the Lord that husband and wife and families should be thus torn apart, frequently to live in sin and adultery. This way of life breaks up many marriages and will eventually have a disruptive effect upon the whole of society. This development is supported by the policy.

The policy of apartheid is constantly being criticised overseas as well as locally. All the criticisms of the apartheid policy will never be stopped if the Government continues to whitewash apartheid, but only through discussions like this, so that real changes can take place. We must know that the church is the conscience of the people and must also be the conscience of the authorities. This is the injunction which the Church received from its master Jesus Christ. We must perform the pastoral and the watchman's office. The truth pointed out by the churches in their open letter may no longer be concealed today. Otherwise we become guilty before the Lord God. We hopefully looked forward to this meeting and are very grateful for it. For the open letter is our cry of need.

When our people listened to your words after the announcement of the verdict of the World Court, when you said on the radio that South Africa would unshakably continue with South West as before then our people understood that you intended consolidating the present conditions and all the bad treatment flowing from it for ever.

Apartheid the Mother

Apartheid is the mother of all the problems in the relationship between the indigenous and the white people. Perhaps the supporters of apartheid thought that the indigenous people would thereby respect the Whites. But we see the problems growing larger. We are regarded as inferior so that bitter hatred arises in the hearts of those who are despised and humiliated. Through this hatred some of our people have already tried to pay the Whites back with acts of revenge.

The development of South West Africa needs both hands, the white hand and the black hand. But we find that it is expected of the black hand to make its contribution with closed eyes and a shut up mouth.

Before the Odendaal Plan was formulated I was also questioned by the commission in the year 1963. In the year 1964, when the Hon. Mr. de Wet Nel proclaimed the Odendaal Plan in Ovamboland I warned at a big meeting against moving people to the homelands against their will. After that we submitted two further joint memoranda to the Government of South Africa, one in 1964 and one in 1967, on account of the homelands and the removals of people. In our letter we said that our nations are too small for each of them to be truly independent. We are being set apart in remote parts of South West Africa. This will later on make us even more dependent upon the Whites who keep the greatest powers in their own hands. This will not lead to peaceful relationships in the future. We therefore said that South West Africa must remain a unit in which everyone contributes an equal share and receives equal treatment. We know and believe that the unity of Whites is not disrupted by their variety of descent. The Whites of various nations respect each other, and all move freely in the whole country of South Africa. No distinctions are drawn between them. Why does the homelands policy make of us strangers in our own country in which we were born and grew up?

Christian Unity

The indigenous people were antagonistic towards each other when they still belonged to heathendom. But praise the Lord, the gospel of peace has brought us together (Gal. 3: 27-28; Ephes. 2: 13-18): 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Jesus Christ.' The unity in our churches is based on a Christian foundation. So also the unity of the peoples of South West Africa can only be based

on a Christian foundation. We experience the unity even though we are members of various races.

The better relationship between the groups and the mutual respect for each other as human beings are not brought about by the separation and setting-apart in homelands, but by mutually respecting each other in a Christian spirit in society. The development of the whole country will be speeded up if all of us, Whites as well as the indigenous peoples, stand next to each other hand in hand for the same purpose.

But if we are divided, not only will the development be hampered, but we shall also become estranged from each other. Especially also when the Government sows doubt and suspicion among the indigenous people and thus tries to break down the unity which was established by the gospel.

Our country South West Africa with its many districts is only one. It is not a South West Africa with many isolated little countries. We therefore asked the Government to plan and to help that this course towards the unity and independence of the country should be adopted; that the Government should prepare for the purpose that the whole country can be independent, to stand on its own feet with the support of South Africa.

I finally wish to express my gratitude that you were so patient in listening to me and I humbly ask that you, the Hon. the Prime Minister, go in upon the matters raised in our open letter during the discussions, and that you find solutions according to your wisdom.

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